Twenty-fourth session

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST*

Telegraphic communication dated 22 August 1969 from the representatives of Afghanistan, Algeria, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Southern Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Republic and Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

1. On behalf of our Governments, we, the undersigned, have the honour to draw the attention of the Members of the United Nations to the grave event of 21 August 1969 in Jerusalem, when the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the holiest shrines in Islam, was extensively damaged by arson. The occurrence of this outrage, during the time that Jerusalem is under the military occupation of Israeli authorities, has filled the population of our countries with profound horror and grief.

2. Since the sacred precincts in Jerusalem proclaimed the spiritual brotherhood of man in God, any damage or desecration of the hallowed sites of one faith cannot but cause anguish to the devoted adherents of another. Our Governments and peoples are, therefore, confident that their sorrow will be shared by all Governments and peoples who cherish the abiding values of the human spirit and hold the Holy City in the highest reverence.

3. We recall that when, soon after the beginning of the Israeli occupation, a burglary was committed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the gold halo and tiara of the statue of the Virgin Mary were removed, our peoples were similarly horrified. In that case, their sense of abhorrence was lessened only by the restoration of the sacred objects, though only after a public outcry and a certain lapse of time.

* Item 27 of the provisional agenda.

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4. Events of this nature have no parallel in the history of Jerusalem during the centuries prior to the Israeli military occupation. Mindful of their symptomatic significance, we wish to impress upon the Security Council and the General Assembly that such events add a vast dimension of human indignation to the situation in Jerusalem and thus further aggravate the threat to peace which that situation constitutes.

5. We, therefore, emphasize the urgency of suitable action by the United Nations towards:

(a) An impartial investigation into the grave event of 20 August 1969;
(b) Preventing the recurrence of any act of vandalism against, or profanation of, the Holy Places in Jerusalem;
(c) Enabling the representatives of the Governments of Islamic countries to assess the damage to the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and to prepare and execute plans for its repairs.

6. While wishing to emphasize that such action can be taken independently of the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 252 (1968) and 267 (1969), we may recall that, by these resolutions, the Security Council has censured in the strongest terms the measures taken by Israel to change the status of the City of Jerusalem, confirmed that these measures are invalid and called upon Israel to rescind them forthwith and, in future, to refrain from all actions designed to alter the status of the City. It follows that neither the Security Council nor any State Member of the United Nations, faithful to its decisions, can extend even an implicit recognition to the validity or legitimacy of Israeli authority over the Holy City. No tacit consent can, therefore, be given to any measures which, in order to delude world public opinion, the Israeli authorities may announce towards an inquiry into the causes of the outbreak of fire in the Holy Mosque and the repair of the damage caused.

7. We request that the text of this telegraphic communication be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.
(Signed) Abdul Samad GHAUS
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